

First Peter 3:13-17
Godward Suffering for Righteousness part 1

Purpose: to inform believers of how to respond in times of suffering for doing good

Introduction: In light of God's favor on the righteous and His anger towards the unrighteous (3:12), believers need to remember that no one can ultimately harm those who are doing good.

- 1) The readers were not yet suffering at the time of Peter's writing—3:13-14a
 - a) Normally no one harms those who do good—3:13 ¹³ *And besides, who will mistreat* [fut. act. ptc. κακόω] *you^{pl} if* [ἐάν] (3rd class condition, possible) *you^{pl} become* [aor. dep. subj. γίνομαι] *imitators* [μιμητής] *of the good* [ἀγαθός]?
 - i) CT reads “zealous” instead of “imitators”
 - ii) No matter what people may do to you, they cannot ultimately harm you. Remember the steadfast faith demonstrated in Psalm 56:4; Romans 8:31.
 - iii) Reflect God's image by doing good (Psalm 119:68; Acts 10:38)
 - b) But there are exceptions to that rule—3:14a
 - i) The less probable situation—¹⁴ *But* [ἀλλά] *even if* [εἰ καί] (4th class condition, less likely, seems remote) *you^{pl} should suffer* [pres. act. opt. πάσχω] *for the sake of* [διὰ] *righteousness* [δικαιοσύνη],
 - ii) The certain pronouncement—(*you^{pl} are*) *blessed/favored* [μακάριος].
 - (1) Recognize the privileges that come through times of suffering, and the ultimate blessings that are ours. God has counted us worthy to suffer for His name (Acts 5:41), and will ultimately reward us in heaven (Matthew 5:10-12).
 - c) Present suffering is not a sign of punishment but of God's blessing both now and especially in the future.
- 2) Believers must prepare for future suffering—3:14b-17
 - a) What must the believers do?—3:14b-15b
 - i) Negative; focus on attitude—3:14b (from Isaiah 8:12)
 - (1) *And do not fear* [aor. dep. impv. φοβέω] *their fear* [φόβος],
 - (a) King Ahaz of Judah struggled with his fear of Kings Rezin and Pekah who were plotting to overthrow him; contrasting the true Remnant and the non-Remnant.
 - (b) Don't let fear of them dictate your response.
 - (2) *and do not be* [μηδέ] *agitated* [aor. pass. subj. as impv. ταρασσώ],
 - (a) Jesus taught us this in John 14:1, 27
 - (3) Fear of people is forbidden; we should only fear God.
 - (4) Believers are not to fear the suffering unbelievers might administer to them. They are to trust in the Lord, believing that He will vindicate His own.
 - ii) Positive; focus on attitude—3:15a (from Isaiah 8:13)

- (1) Demonstrate that you genuinely recognize the deity of Christ—¹⁵ *but* [δέ] *set apart* [aor. act. impv. ἀγιάζω] *the Lord* [κύριος] *God* [θεός] *in* [ἐν] *your^{pl} hearts* [καρδία],
 - (a) A reference to Christ, as the CT shows.
 - (b) Live in awe of His holiness and honor Him through your choices.
 - (c) The inner and outer life are inseparable, for what happens within will inevitably be displayed to all, especially when one suffers.
- (2) Be prepared to defend your faith—and [δέ] *always* [ἀεί] (*be*) (assumed impv.) *prepared* [έτοιμος] *toward* [πρός] *a defense* [ἀπολογία]
 - (a) This demands that, in informal circumstances when believers are asked spontaneously about their faith, it is necessary to have an intelligent grasp of your hope, and an ability to present it to others.
 - (b) Every believer should grasp the essentials of the faith and should have the ability to explain to others why they think the Christian faith is true.
- b) For whom is this defense to be prepared?—3:15c *to everyone* [πᾶς] *who is asking* [pres. act. ptc. αἰτέω] *you^{pl} an account* [λόγος] *concerning* [περί] *the confident expectation* [ἐλπίς] *that is in you^{pl} ...*
 - i) The N.T. does not separate the inner from the outer, the private from the public, for whatever is on the inside is manifested on the outside. Here the hope that animates believers will become so evident that unbelievers will ask for an explanation.
- c) How are believers to respond to people?—3:15d-16a
 - i) What two traits are needed?—3:15d
 - (1) With selflessness—with [μετά] *non-assertiveness* [πραΰτης] (i.e., mildness)
 - (a) Which the wives were told to demonstrate in 3:4.
 - (2) With awe—and *awe* [φόβος] (of God which leads to appropriate respect of people)
 - (3) My relationship with God enables me to respond appropriately to unbelievers, which is what the next phrase clearly states.
 - ii) When are these traits needed?—3:16a ¹⁶ *while having* [pres. act. ptc. ἔχω] *a good/clear* [ἀγαθός] *conscience* [συνείδησις],
 - (1) Your conscience is the God-given internal evaluator of your attitudes, affections, and actions.
- d) Why are the believers to be this way?—3:16b-17
 - i) In light of accusations—3:16b *in order that* [ἵνα] *in the thing in which* [ἐν ᾧ] *they are speaking evil* [pres. act. ind. καταλαλέω] *of you^{pl} as* [ὡς] *evil doers* [κακοποιοίς],
 - (1) Shame to the abusers—the *ones insulting* [pres. act. ptc. ἐπηρεάζω] *your^{pl} good* [ἀγαθός] *lifestyle* [ἀναστροφή] *in Christ* [ἐν Χριστός] *may be embarrassed* [aor. pass. subj. καταισχύνω] (now, and in the future).
 - (2) Their accusations will be proven false. Isn't this what happened in Peter's life in Acts 2:13, 37?

- ii) In light of God's will—3:17 ¹⁷ *Because* [γάρ] *it is better* [κρίνεται],
 - (1) Less probable circumstance—if [εἰ] (4th class condition, less likely, seems remote) *the desire* [θέλημα] *of God* [θεός] *should so desire* [pres. act. opt. θέλω] *you*^{pl},
 - (a) The readers were not yet suffering at the time of Peter's writing.
 - (2) Suffer for the right reason—to *suffer* [pres. act. inf. πάσχω] *while doing good* [pres. act. ptc. ἀγαθοποιέω] *than* [ἢ] *while doing evil* [pres. act. ptc. κακοποιέω].
 - (a) See also 2:20.
- 3) Summary and applications
 - a) Would the people who really know you identify you as an imitator of what is good? (3:13)
 - b) Suffering provides us with the choice of whom we will choose to fear: God or people?
- 4) **Take-home truth:** Live in God's presence.